

CHRISTIAN PERFORMING ARTS FESTIVAL

Enthusiasts gather to utilize art ministry

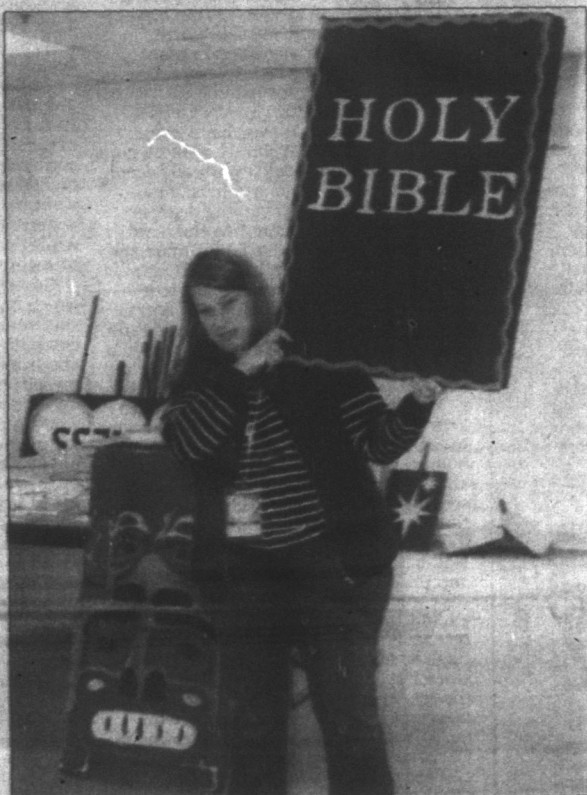
By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

More than 225 participants and instructors attended the 2015 Mississippi Baptist Christian Performing Arts Festival (CPAF) on February 27-28 at Country Woods Church in Byram.

"We had a great time together and learned how to utilize the performing arts as a ministry to interpret the Gospel and bring people closer to a relationship with Jesus Christ," said Ken Hall, CPAF coordinator and consultant in the Discipleship and Family Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson.

A total of 101 sessions were held during the two-day conference in the areas of drama, clowning, puppets, and media. Participants were able to sample a variety of subjects with intriguing titles such as Improvisation Worship; Skits, Bits, and More; Foam

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BIG BIBLE — Eliese McAllister of Mobile, Al., explains how to construct a king-sized Bible for use as a prop in puppet ministry applications, during the 2015 Mississippi Baptist Christian Performing Arts Festival Feb. 27-28 at Country Woods Church in Byram. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Supreme Court to settle same sex marriage issue nationwide

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — The U.S. Supreme Court announced March 5 that it will hear oral arguments on April 28 in a case that could lead to nationwide legalization of same sex marriage by the end of June.

Advocates on both sides of the issue recognize the significance of the Supreme Court's decision in this case. "This case could potentially transform the cultural landscape of America," said Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville.

"We should pray for the court that they will not seek to redefine marriage, and even more than that we should pray for churches who will know how to articulate and embody a Christian vision of marriage as the one-flesh union of a man and a woman in the tumultuous years ahead."

Evan Wolfson, president of the pro-same sex marriage group Freedom to Marry in Washington, D.C., has said same sex marriage proponents hope this will be "the last chapter in our campaign

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"... we should pray for churches who will know how to articulate and embody a Christian vision of marriage as the one-flesh union of a man and a woman in the tumultuous years ahead."

Russell Moore
president of the
Southern Baptist
Ethics & Religious
Liberty Commission

Muslim attacks continue across African continent

NIAMEY, Niger (BP) — Persecuted Christians in the West African country of Niger remain "very upbeat" and continue to move forward despite attacks in their country earlier this year.

International Mission Board (IMB) strategy leader Greg Dorsey (name changed) said local Christians told him, "We've only lost things. We've not lost the church, just some buildings."

Small mobs of Muslims reportedly ransacked and burned more than 50 structures throughout Niamey in mid-January. The incident appeared to be related to an eruption of violence in Niger on Jan. 16-17 that left at least 10 people dead over protests of a magazine cover published by the satirical publication Charlie Hebdo featuring a cartoon of Mohammed.

Charlie Hebdo ran the cover in response to the Jan. 9 terrorist attack on its Paris offices that claimed the lives of 12 people.

Both missionaries and national believers in Niamey found marks on their gates, indicating their homes were potential targets.

The strategy leader expressed thankfulness that buildings, not people were targeted in Niamey. "There is a sense that this is the time for the church, that... what was meant for evil, God intends for good."

Instead of seeking retaliation or revenge, believers who lost their homes and possessions voiced confidence that "God is good and Jesus is still Lord," he said.

Fellow strategy leader Brian Foshee (name changed) said, "They see... this is how we can demonstrate what it means to follow Christ and what we do if we're going to follow up what we believe with our actions."

Foshee said he was encouraged to hear that a representative of the evangelical churches in Niamey stated publicly on radio and television that local believers forgave those who damaged and burned their property. "That was pretty powerful," he said.

Dorsey shared the story of a university student who lost everything — all of his books and clothes. The student said "Hey, I forgive you, it's OK. It was just stuff I lost... and I forgive you."

Though the attacks appeared to be well planned and coordinated, stories abound of members of the Muslim community who warned their Christian friends and neighbors of impending danger. Some Muslims protected the homes of Christians while the Christians were in hiding, and offered them shelter.

Dorsey said some Christians expressed that their Muslim neighbors were ashamed of what was done in the name of Islam. "It would be worth noting, while they targeted the church very, very clearly, they also were targeting others as well. They targeted, I believe, some Christian businesses along the way, but they also targeted the 'evils' for Islam — such as bars and nightclubs and brothels. Some hotels with bars sustained heavy damage."

Dorsey said believers appear to be working through the fear and vulnerability they felt

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MAR 25 2015



From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Exceptional Baptists

In our mixed-up modern culture, there are individuals and institutions in this country who so despise America that they have earned a nickname: the Hate America Crowd. No matter how much good America does, it's never good enough. No matter how many wrongs have been righted by her noble people, the Hate America crowd is never satisfied.

I was reminded of them this week, as Baptists in Mississippi proved once again the hateful-ness is unjustified.

Spring Break is occurring across much of the state, which Mississippi Baptists see not as a chance to party hard while working on their early-season tan at some luxurious Florida resort, but rather as an irresistible opportunity to share the Gospel with a lost world.

Mississippi Baptists have spread out all over the planet this week to do just that. One of the hot spots seems to be earthquake-ravaged Haiti. Mississippi Baptist mission trippers in only one group number enough to fill an airliner.

It is true that America is far from perfect, but it's also true that we have corrected many of the mistakes of the past and don't intend to repeat them in the future. One wouldn't know it from listening to the Hate America Crowd — which seems at times to have overtaken academia, the national news media, and politicians of certain persuasions — but Americans are also the most generous people on the planet. Haiti is merely the latest reinforcement of that fact.

While economic giants like China and Saudi Arabia have contributed a pittance (if anything at all) to the earthquake relief effort for the residents of the poorest country in the world, America has stepped up as it always has and Mississippi Baptists are leading the way once again.

"It's an incredible privilege to be able to help the Haitians as we have," said Rick Picerno, an orthopedic surgeon and member of First Church in Jacksonville, FL. He helped organize and recruit a Florida medical team that is

working out of a makeshift field hospital. They are determined to stay as long as they are needed.

Mississippi Baptist disaster relief volunteers have already been there and done that, operating a small hospital out of a Haitian Baptist church across the street from the national capitol building.

"I thank God and the American people who have come to Haiti to help with that tragedy," said Potus Ketnil, a young Haitian woman who was brought to the U.S. along with her two-year old child after the earthquake and is now under the care of a Haitian Baptist church in Miami.

Potus was forced to leave her husband behind, because he hasn't been seen since the earthquake struck.

Southern Baptists and Mississippi Baptists will continue to be at the forefront of relief efforts in Haiti and around the world, because that's who we are. Jesus changed us and remade us in His image when we accepted Him as our Lord and Savior.

That's who we are as Christians, and that's who we are as Americans. To the Hate America Crowd, understand this: America is indeed an exceptional nation, and Americans prove it every day in places like Haiti. American Christians such as Mississippi Baptists are an important part of that exceptionalism. Nothing the haters say or do will ever change that.

As for those American Christians and Southern Baptists and Mississippi Baptists, the time is now to press on with our mission. Time may be short to save those who don't know Jesus.

"God passed through Haiti after the earthquake and many of the people heard God's voice because His true church — the people — was outside the walls of (their church) buildings," said Fritz Wilson, executive director of Southern Baptist Disaster Relief at Southern Baptists' North American Mission Board.

"Maybe God is trying to tell the church in the U.S. to do the same. Get outside the walls and let people see, hear, and feel His love." Now, that is indeed exceptional.

Marriage is no joke

Last month, a 40-year-old woman in Houston, Texas, married herself. That's right. Because she had found no suitable companion by the time she reached 40 years of age, she decided that she would go it alone.

"I'd been saying a few years that if I hadn't gotten married by the time I was 40, I'd just have a wedding by myself," Yasmin Eleby told ABC News. "I decided I didn't want it to be a joke. I wanted to have a celebration of myself. My wedding was going to be about me making a commitment to love myself, to honor myself, and to know my self-worth."

The action carries no legal weight (yet), but is just the latest news reflecting society's disregard for marriage.

Unfortunately, Ms. (Mrs.?) Eleby's case is not unique. It even has a name: sologamy. Perhaps it should come as no surprise that this would eventually occur. People have tried to marry pets, buildings, and objects with varying degrees of success, not even counting the recent national debates over same sex marriage.

In Britain last year, a woman "married" her dog after her marriage to a human male didn't work out. In 2007, an American woman "married" the Eiffel Tower. While we may laugh at the ridiculousness of some of these things, it's not funny. It's tragic.

We are a civilization that burns with love for ourselves. In our headlong rush to satisfy the desires of our hearts and bodies, we have exalted ourselves above all. The resulting paroxysm of pleasure-seeking hedonism is tearing our civilization apart, family by family. America today is a lot like Israel as described in Isaiah 59: decadent, rudderless, willful, and prone to evil.

It would be easy to think that the assault on the bedrock of civilization is recent. It's not. The institution of marriage has been under attack by Satan since Day One. We can certainly point to the recent efforts to widen the concept of marriage beyond "one man, one woman." These trends should be alarming to Christians, and we must be prepared.

The framework for universal acceptance of same sex marriage is already being laid, even here in the buckle of the Bible Belt. We must figure out how we're going to respond to all this.



Guest opinion with Bill Moak

You have to look no further than the Garden of Eden to see how Satan drove a wedge into what had previously been a perfect union between Adam and Eve, resulting in the awful gulf that now separates fallen man from his Creator.

As alarming as these trends are, they are just symptoms of a larger problem. In the eyes of much of our civilization, marriage is nothing more than a legal contract and since marriage has been attached to tangible social benefits, others want in. One clever way to do that is to widen the definition of marriage, all the while eroding its significance in the eyes of society.

So, what should be our response? If we go back to Eleby's statement, she said something sadly profound. Did you catch it? "My wedding was going to be about me making a commitment to love myself, to honor myself and to know my self-worth." Although most people wouldn't go to these extremes, somewhere along the line, someone must have failed her.

Every day, millions go about the world wondering why they are even alive at all — unloved, alone, miserable. Ultimately, many of our problems in this world spring from people desperately seeking attention and validation. Think about the woman at the well, or the leper, or the woman about to be stoned to death. How do you think they felt about themselves before Jesus came along?

Jesus came for these people. There is not a single recorded interaction between Jesus and anyone that He didn't show compassion and care, that He didn't recognize their need and offer healing. He reminded us that when we help our fellow man in his name, we are doing it to — and for — Him.

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Ukrainian believers pray for peace in midst of war

KHARKIV, Ukraine (BP) — As the sun topped the horizon of Kharkiv's central square March 2, a group of people huddled together on their knees and prayed for their city. While the moment passed without celebration or fanfare, it marked the 365th consecutive day the group has gathered.

They came from different parts of the city and were a mix of evangelical denominations and Orthodox believers, but they focused on one goal — to pray for peace in their city, which is located very close to the region where Ukrainian soldiers and pro-Russian separatists battle for control over eastern Ukraine.

Last year, protesters clashed in the streets of Kharkiv. "When we heard that people started fighting, we came here to the center of the city and we kneeled here," said Nadia, the wife of a Ukrainian pastor.

At the time it was predicted by some that Kharkiv would be one of the first cities to fall to pro-Russian separatists. However, a year later, the group continues to pray for peace in their city and is grateful that God has continued to protect them from the fighting.

"Our city is under the wing of the Lord," Nadia said. "There is peace and I praise God for that. But our hearts are broken for cities where war takes place."

One pastor, Alexander, believes the group is having an impact on the entire city by meeting on the central square each morning. "People are worried and discouraged, and all the news is controversial," Alexander said. "I believe that our ministry here will bring people peace, to bring truth, to bring hope to God's people."

"We see that we need these prayers and that our country needs these prayers," Nadia said. "That is why we are still here."

"People are worried and discouraged, and all the news is controversial. I believe that our ministry here will bring people peace, to bring truth, to bring hope to God's people."

Alexander
Ukrainian pastor

An International Mission Board worker, who serves in Kharkiv and regularly attends the daily prayer meetings, said the group has committed to meet daily for at least the next six months and does not know if or when the group will stop meeting.

For now, they will continue to gather each morning as they pray for their city and for peace.

Pray for Christian workers and believers in Ukraine as they minister to their communities. Pray for a resolution to the crisis in Ukraine. Pray that lives will be changed and that people will follow Jesus during this time of war.

The United Nations Refugee Agency has reported that more than one million Ukrainians have been displaced as a result of the war in eastern Ukraine. Countless others have suffered property damage due to rocket and missile attacks.

For more information on how to get involved, visit facebook.com/RebirthEUA, or send an email to rebirtheasternukraine@gmail.com. At netcommunity.imb.org/giving-search-page, in the Search Projects by Keyword search box, type "Ukraine."



Ukraine's eastern war leads to ministry successes in west

KIEV, Ukraine (BP) — More than a year after the Euro-maidan revolution on Kiev's Independence Square, thousands came to memorialize "The Heavenly Hundred" — those who lost their lives during bloody protests in February 2014.

Much has changed in Ukraine during the past year. A new president is in office. War continues in the east between pro-Russian separatists and the Ukrainian Army despite a recently negotiated cease-fire agreement.

Not all news coming out of Ukraine is bad, International Mission Board (IMB) workers report. At the same time prayer services were being held for the fallen at the central square (also known as Maidan Nezalezhnosti), a new church was being birthed across town as 16 people gathered for worship in a former beauty salon.

Pastor Oleg, who leads the new congregation, is a church planter from the Luhansk region who has been forced to flee his home and his church there due to the war. "This was not in my plan. I had no desire to come to the big city. I was content to pastor my church and plant new churches in the Luhansk region, but God had different plans."

Leaders of the church-planting program at the Kiev Theological Seminary say Baptist



WAR'S REFUGEE — Pastor Oleg, a displaced church planter from eastern Ukraine, preaches at Kiev's new church plant, God's Design, during their first service Feb. 22. He longs for the day he will be able to return to ministry in Luhansk, his home territory in eastern Ukraine. (BP photo courtesy of IMB)

leaders in Ukraine recently began an emphasis to plant new churches in Kiev and other areas of the west, but they were short on church planters and did not know who would start and lead these new church plants.

IMB worker Dan Upchurch, who teaches church planting at the seminary, explained that many of their students came from Ukraine's east, which has seen the fastest percentage of church growth over the past 25 years.

Upchurch said that in recent months they have seen several of the church planting students move from their homes in the east so they could continue to plant churches in the central and western parts of the country.

When asked if he would ever return to his home church, a teary-eyed Pastor Oleg said he longed for the day he could return. "In the meantime, I will plant churches," he said. "That is what God designed me to do."



FAITH IN ACTION — As passers-by make their way to work in the center of Karkhiv, Ukraine, Christians from many confessions gather together to pray for their city. Using well-worn pieces of foam to protect their knees, the group prays not only for Ukraine, but Russia and those who are at war in Ukraine's east. (BP photo courtesy of IMB)

All the signs are pointing to the fact that spring is on the way and summer can't be far behind. I have seen some birds that are already starting to fly back toward the north, and this past Sunday was the celebration of the time change. Then we will have an early Easter and the warm, wonderful days of summer should be right upon us. The reason I'm telling you this is so you can gear up or help the folks in your church who are working with children and youth, especially, to get ready for the camps that will be ready for them.

I remember summer after summer we would be getting ready to go to camp and how excited I was. I think the dominant feeling in my life was how wonderful it was to get away from my family, my mom and dad and my brothers. What a fantastic thing to have several consecutive days away from all of them. Now, I realize they must have been overjoyed at the fact that I would be gone and they would be by themselves and away from me sending me off to camp. But we both benefited. It must have been peace at home. It was good for both of us, and I am sure they, along with me, must have been exuberant and filled with incredible joy as they said goodbye to me and I said goodbye to them. I can still remember as though it was just a few years ago, loading up the cars with a bunch of 9 and 10 year old boys and heading off to camp. We were so excited as we anticipated the fun and the good times that camp would bring. What we did not know was how much God was involved in us going, and Him going with us, and what He would do as He worked in our hearts and lives during those days.

Looking back those decades ago it becomes obvious that these were God moments in some kids' lives, for some of us had trusted Jesus as our Savior and were



Summer Camp

on those early days of trying to live for him. Others would make that decision for Christ at camp, and all of us would be drawn into encounters with our Lord that seemed to be indelibly printed on our minds and hearts, and that so many years later was still vividly with us. Those experiences were so life transforming and life shaping for me that I just feel compelled to write and encourage you to help your boys and girls to take advantage of the Baptist camps and conference centers here in Mississippi at Garaywa and Central Hills.

We are blessed in our state to have two Baptist conference and retreat centers that are available and operate year round, but during the summer especially are camps with a cause. In fact, the cause at Garaywa and Central Hills is in fact the cause of Christ. The reason I'm giving you a heads up about the camps is so that you can begin right now to get a group of boys and girls to focus on a date and connect them with

the camps. If you will do that, helping and encouraging your workers to help and encourage the young people to come to camp, it can be one of the most wonderful memories of this coming summer. Actually, it can be one of the most wonderful memories of a lifetime.

For me as a youngster, getting to go to camp in the summer was one of my fondest memories. I think about the fun and games and crafts and activities that we had that have stayed a part of the fabric of my life all these years. I think about the inspirational moments that not only touched my heart, but literally shaped my life as we would hear messages from missionaries around the world and from pastors who lovingly presented the message of Jesus to all of us. Just so you will clearly understand how important camp is, last summer just in the summer camping months, over 300 boys and girls came to know Jesus as Savior. I'm talking about eternal things and eternal

destiny changed because of Jesus and because someone cared enough to help get these children to camp. It is no insignificant thing; it is a monumental thing.

Here's what I need you to do. If you don't have anyone in your family, a boy or girl or a youth, who could attend camp, well, that's fine; you can still pause and ask God's blessing upon the kids who will be under the sound of the Gospel and in the care of capable staff. But beyond that, some of you can do another wonderful thing, and that is to help the kids get to the camp. You may not be able to drive a group of them to camp, but you can pray for them. You may even have a child in your church or someone you know and are aware that they cannot afford for a child to go to camp and you could quietly, discreetly provide the funds so that they could go. That boy or girl would be blessed and you would certainly be blessed beyond measure.

I thank all of you who have helped financially to make the camp experience in Mississippi incredible through your faithful, consistent giving to the Margaret Lackey State Mission Offering. A portion of that offering each year goes to provide for the camps so that anyone who wants to go we can help to go because we care. For literally thousands of children, your prayers and your care will make an eternal difference in their lives.

If you or your church wants to get more information about summer camp for your children or students, please visit www.mbc.org or call Central Hills at 662-289-9730 or Garaywa Camp and Conference Center at 601-924-7034.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

College News



Brett Golson, assistant professor of religion, chair of the Department of Christian Ministries and director of bivocational ministries, and Mihaela Florescu, a senior from the eastern European country of Moldova, were recently recognized as the **WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY HEADWAE** faculty and student honorees. The yearly award recognizes outstanding faculty members and students from Mississippi's 34 public and private institutions of higher learning.

In other College News:

► The William Carey University School of Education has seen an enrollment increase in each trimester of the 2014-2015 academic year, school officials recently announced. Ben Burnett, dean of the School of Education, said the spring trimester saw the largest enrollment increase with a jump of eight percent. The School of Education has recently upgraded existing programs or added new programs in online formats, including the specialist's degree in instructional leadership. This program is intended for students interested in careers in public, parochial or private school leadership. Two tracks, instructional leadership or instructional assessment, are offered in the program. For more information on the School of Education, call (601) 318-6600 or visit www.wmcarey.edu.



Kimberly Sledge, Puckett, an accounting student from **MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE**, was one of five students from across the nation who participated in the Association for Government Accountants collegiate leadership conference. During meetings Feb. 11-12 in Washington, D.C., Sledge was able to network with some of America's most successful accountants. She received a \$1000 scholarship.

BIBL i O C I P H E R

ZI XF FUGKLF EPHNYFUZUC, CJG GF-
HAFYP RZYP XJK HN RZYP NJUN; IJL
RPHY NJU ZN PF RPJW YPF IHYPFL
EPHNYFUFYP UJY?

PFDLFRN YRFAQF: NFQFU

Clue: I = F

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: 2 Peter 1:2

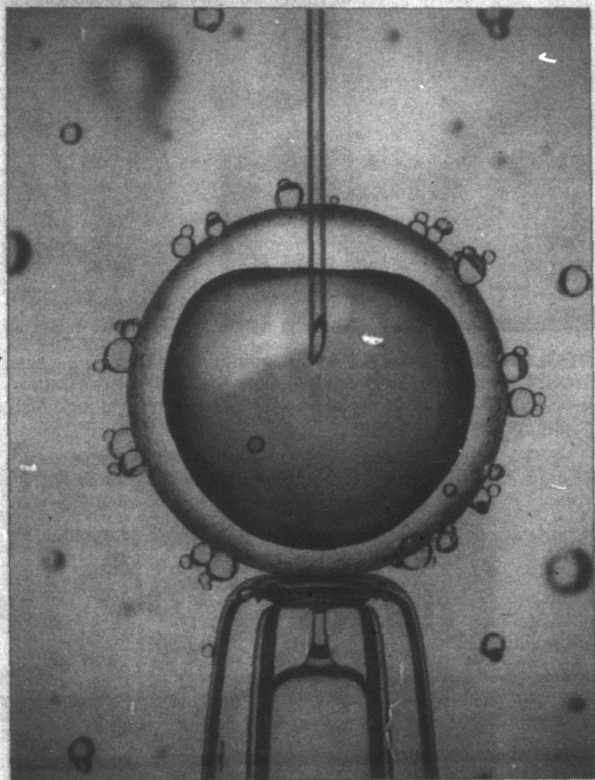
By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

Easter Programs

► **New Hope Church, Foxworth:** The Road to Calvary Mar. 20 - 22, 7 p.m. Nursery provided; some graphic scenes may not be suitable for all children.

► **Immanuel Church, Greenwood:** Easter sunrise service Apr. 5, 7 a.m.; church wide breakfast, 8 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.; cantata, 11 a.m.

Want a baby? Technology opens troubling frontiers



NEW FRONTIER — Researchers at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom and Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot, Israel, are on the cusp of developing male/male, female/female reproductive technology.

NASHVILLE (BP) — Same sex couples could soon have their own biological children by utilizing a male/male, female/female reproductive technology being developed by researchers at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom and Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot, Israel.

Christian bioethicists have classified the potential new technology, which could also allow a person to create a baby without a partner, as rife with moral problems.

Exuberance over such technologies is "all expressed in terms of what the adults want and desire," Paige Cunningham, executive director of the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity at Trinity International University in Deerfield, Ill., told Baptist Press (BP).

"I would like someone to say, 'What about the children?' They don't have any voice in how they are constructed. They don't have any voice in how they are the subject of an experiment like this."

The Cambridge and Weizmann Institute researchers have discovered how to take skin cells from an adult, transform them into what are known as induced pluripotent stem cells (iPS) and then develop those iPS cells into the precursors of human eggs and sperm, various news sources have reported. The know-how to produce iPS cells has been around

for some time, but their potential development into eggs and sperm is new.

The next step of the research process will be to develop the precursor cells, known as primordial germ cells (PGCs), into mature sperm and eggs. The maturation process will involve inserting the PGCs into a human or animal ovary or testicle, or developing a laboratory process to achieve the same effect.

If the research proves successful, an egg could be developed from the skin cells of a male and then combined with the sperm of another male to produce an embryo. A surrogate mother would have to carry the resultant baby to term. Alternately, a female's skin cells could be developed into sperm and combined with an egg from another female, with one of the two female partners carrying the baby to term.

The same process, if developed successfully, could also allow a single person to contribute both an egg and sperm and produce a child without a second parent.

"We have succeeded in the first and most important step of the process, where we succeed in reaching the progenitor cell state for sperm and egg (though it is very important to emphasize that we have not achieved mature sperm and eggs)," Jacob Hanna, one of the lead researchers in the project, told The Daily Beast internet

news service. "So we are now focusing on completing the second half of this process. Once that is achieved this may become useful for any individual with fertility problems."

If lesbians someday use this technique to become parents, they will only be able to produce female offspring unless a Y chromosome is somehow imported into their genetic material. Female genetic material does not contain the Y chromosomes necessary to produce baby boys.

"We're talking about manufacturing children in all of these [scenarios]," David Prentice, vice president and research director of the Charlotte Lozier Institute in Washington, D.C., told BP. "If you get into that mindset, you might envision having not a sperm bank, but a Y-chromosome bank where you can just add a Y chromosome to some of these cells — find the right mix that you want of traits and add that Y chromosome in there. It's of great concern."

Producing rather than creating a baby is "intrinsically wrong," Cunningham said. "When we start constructing children by using some cytoplasm from this cell or the nucleus from that cell and start mixing things up, we are no longer welcoming [children], but we are creating them, in many cases to fulfill a desire or need of our own."

Wa. florist facing economic ruin for her Christian values

RICHLAND, Wash. (BP) — A Southern Baptist florist does not regret her nine-year friendship with a homosexual man who won a lawsuit against her after she refused to design floral arrangements for his same sex wedding, she told Baptist Press.

"If Rob [Robert Ingersoll] walked in the store today, I would hug him and catch up on his life," Barronelle Stutzman, owner of Arlene's Flowers in Richland, Wa., told Baptist Press (BP). "The same faith that tells me that I can't be a part of Rob's wedding is the same faith that tells me to love him as Christ does."

"Christ loves us all regardless, and it's not my place to judge him, or to judge anybody. It's my place to be an example of Christ. Do they see Christ in what I do, and how I treat them?"

Stutzman, a 70-year-old member of Richland Church in Richland, had provided floral arrangements for Ingersoll and most recently his friend Curt Freed on numerous occasions. On March 2013, she refused to

use her gifts and talents to design flowers for their wedding.

"I waited on Rob for nine years and created flowers for him on all types of occasions, but when it comes to my faith, marriage is between a man and a woman, and that's where the line is drawn," she told BP Feb. 26. "I cannot create something for him in good faith. I wouldn't be honoring God's Word."

Stutzman was found guilty Feb. 18 in Benton County Superior Court of violating the couple's U.S. and state civil rights, and was held personally liable for the couple's damages and attorney fees. That put her at risk of losing her business and personal holdings. Backed by the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) in Scottsdale, Az., Stutzman is appealing and is prepared to take it to the nation's highest court.

Ingersoll and Freed have since married.

The issue isn't about Ingersoll being homosexual, said Stutzman, who according to court documents has employed

openly homosexual individuals through her business.

"The issue is, marriage is between a man and a woman according to my faith," she told BP. "I just think of myself as a follower of Christ and the Bible teaches that marriage is between a man and a woman, and the Bible is my authority."

In a court filing by ADF, professor Denny Burk of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., provided a statement that drew from his experience in theological education and training. In the document, he explained the difference between providing flowers for the couple's homosexual courtship as opposed to their marriage.

"A Christian in the Southern Baptist tradition who owns a business is not obligated to question every customer regarding the potential uses to which the products or services sold by the business might be put," said Burk, professor of biblical studies at Boyce College, the undergraduate arm of Southern Seminary.



STANDING HER GROUND — Barronelle Stutzman arranges flowers in her Richland, Wa., shop. The 70-year-old has appealed a court case she lost after refusing to arrange flowers for a same sex marriage ceremony. (BP photo/screen capture from YouTube)

"In addition, a business owner who becomes aware that his or her products or services might be used for a sinful or immoral purpose is not generally obligated to refuse to sell such products or services, although the duty to love one's neighbor and avoid scandal might involve refusal to sell such products or services under certain circumstances," he stated.

"In either case, the equal

dignity and worth of the customer requires the business owner to respect the customer's God-given free will. However, the business owner must not engage in a transaction that involves participation in or material cooperation with a sinful act because it would constitute personal sin on the part of the business owner and would therefore be subject to God's judgment."

Just for the Record



The children, youth, and some adults of **MT. PISGAH CHURCH, CARROLLTON**, attended the Newsboys concert in Greenwood Mar. 1 after enjoying a pizza night out. Lanny Haley, pastor.



BEULAH CHURCH, DECATUR, had their wild game supper Feb. 28. Special guests, from left, were Micah Harbison, Cameron Stovall, and Seth Harbison with Call 'em In Outdoors. Also shown is pastor Gary Rivers.



The youth from **PORT GIBSON CHURCH, PORT GIBSON**, visited Grace Church, Vicksburg, to perform their new puppet ministry Feb. 11.

In other Church News:

► **Lebanon Association** in Hattiesburg has changed its name to Pine Belt Association; effective immediately, and moved its offices to Hardy Street Church, Hattiesburg. Telephone: (601) 261-2771. E-mail: 2mapbba@att.net. Mailing address: P.O. Box 2084, Hattiesburg, MS 39403. Pine Belt Association consists of the Baptist churches of Forrest County.



FREDONIA CHURCH, NEW ALBANY, ordained Jeff High as deacon Mar. 1. He is shown with his wife Kim.



EDGEFIELD CHURCH, MCCOOL, held a deacon ordination Mar. 1 for James (Jamie) Horace Wilkinson. He is shown with his wife Jamie Renne; his eldest son, Blake; twins Elijah and Abigail; and youngest son, Ryder. They are joined by pastor James Ellis.



The youth of **NESHOBA CHURCH, UNION**, entertained the senior members at their J.O.Y. Valentine party with their hand puppets and skills. Shown, front, are Scott Westberry Jr. and Walker Smith; back, Haley McKinnion, Lauren Gilmer, Isabella Westberry, and Jordan McKinnion.

Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit, that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name. — John 1:12

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.



RAISED IN NEWNESS — Lawrence Duhon (right), associate pastor of missions and evangelism at First Church in Keller, Texas, helps baptize an unidentified young Yalunka woman during a recent church mission trip to Mali. (BP photo courtesy of First Church, Keller, Texas)

Church emphasizes CP, turns love for missions into 'wildfire'

KELLER, Texas (BP) — Keith Sanders, pastor for the last 10 years of First Church in Keller, Texas, describes the church's love for missions as "almost a wildfire out of control."

Nearly every month, some church member participates in a short-term mission trip. The congregation is about to begin its fourth church plant. Cooperative Program (CP) giving has more than tripled over the last seven years.

"The Lord has blessed our church tremendously, financially," Sanders said. "We see a relationship between our willingness to give away, and God's blessings. We have found the more we give, the more we have to give."

"I believe in the Great Commission. The Cooperative Program is simply a tool to obey the Great Commission. We have seen from our mission trips that when the missionaries have the ability to stay on the field — rather than returning to the U.S. to plead for more financial support — how much more can be accomplished for the Lord."

When Sanders became senior pastor in 2005, he hired Lawrence Duhon, a former missionary to Albania, as associate pastor of missions and evangelism.

"He has a great heart for missions," Sanders said of Duhon. "He developed a unified strategy we're still working with. We went from a Christmas offering to a year-round Global Impact Offering. That increased our mis-

sion giving 10-fold within just a few years."

The congregation of about 1,300 Sunday morning worshippers also adopted an unreached people group in West Africa and has ministered and evangelized there as often as six times a year.

"We've seen many, many of those people come to faith in Christ," Sanders said. "It was great for our church because we asked [the congregation] to pray, and upon [the mission team's] return, the church heard what God had done. That led to a real spark in interest in missions."

The church's interest in planting churches has grown with its commitment to missions. "Church planting in the West is originally what I thought the Lord wanted me to do," Sanders said, "but in God's sovereignty, He has me holding the rope for others."

So far, those "others" are church plants that have grown into:

- Blue Mountain Church in Baker City, Or., where about 120 people attend Sunday services.

- Desert Ridge Church in St. George, Ut., where more than 80 attend.

- Foundation Church in North Euless, Texas, launched in September 2014.

A church plant scheduled to begin this year in St. Marie, northeastern Montana, will be the only church in the town.

St. Marie was known as Glasgow Air Force Base un-

til in closed in 1976 and its 10,000 residents scattered. The nearly abandoned site is being utilized to meet the need for housing for Bakken oilfield workers, and about 600 people have moved there so far.

First Church, Keller, is in the process of purchasing an abandoned church for the price of taxes owed. Members plan to renovate the building in time to launch services in the fall of 2015.

"Our goal is to plant a church every three years," Sanders said. "Our M.O. is that we don't want to have satellite churches — we want them to be autonomous churches. We don't rush in, because we don't have all the answers but our people are very open to be used by God."

"We're ahead of the one-every-three-years pace we set nine years ago, and I hope we will continue to outstrip that."

In the last 10 years, First Church, Keller, has produced pastors who have served in 14 states, Sanders said, and the congregation is energizing its emphasis on discipleship.

"You've got to keep the base strong so you can send people out," the pastor said. "We've been going through the book of Acts for three years here on Sunday mornings. That's where you really see missions."

"I don't have to be the Holy Spirit, to tell people this is what they ought to be doing. The Holy Spirit will take the words [of the message] and apply it to people's lives."

Netanyahu addresses U.S. Congress on eve of Iranian agreement

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — Militant Islamists with nuclear weapons would be the likely result of an agreement the United States may sign with Iran, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told a joint meeting of the U.S. Congress on March 3.

"The greatest danger facing our world is the marriage of militant Islam with nuclear weapons," said Netanyahu, who joined Winston Churchill as one of two foreign leaders to address Congress three times. "To defeat ISIS and let Iran get nuclear weapons would be to win the battle but lose the war. We can't let that happen."

Approximately 50 House and Senate Democrats did not attend Netanyahu's address, The New York Times reported. Mississippi Congressman Bennie Thompson was among them.

Netanyahu opened his speech by praising Obama's support for Israel and saying, "I deeply regret that some perceive my being here as political. That was never my intention."

A "profound obligation" to oppose Iran's quest for nuclear weapons motivated his speech, Netanyahu said, noting that, driven by radical Islam, Iran seeks to annihilate Israel and control its Arab neighbors. Iran also persecutes Christians, homosexuals, and journalists, he said.

The Iranian regime fights terrorists in Iraq and Syria only because it doesn't want ISIS to usurp Iran's leading role in the advance of militant Islam, Netanyahu said. The difference is that ISIS is armed with butcher knives, captured weapons, and YouTube, whereas Iran could

soon be armed with intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear bombs."

The nuclear deal being considered by Iran, the U.S., and five other nations would allow Iran to keep around 6,000 uranium enrichment centrifuges while limiting development of more efficient centrifuges. It also would limit stockpiles of material that could be developed into nuclear weapons and subject Iran's nuclear facilities to inspection, the Washington Post reported.

The agreement likely would last 10-15 years, and a March 24 deadline has been set for establishing the framework of a final accord.

Netanyahu told Congress having no agreement would be preferable because the proposed accord "would all but guarantee" that Iran obtains nuclear weapons — "lots of them."

Netanyahu said two concessions make the deal unreasonable: allowing Iran to maintain a "vast nuclear infrastructure" and permitting "virtually all" restrictions on Iran's nuclear program to expire in a decade.

The deal would not require "a single nuclear facility" to be demolished and would not sufficiently empower inspectors to halt illegitimate weapons development, Netanyahu said. Additionally, Iran could amass a "full arsenal" of nuclear weapons legitimately after the accord expires.

"Iran's regime is as radical as ever," Netanyahu said. "The ideology of Iran's revolutionary regime is deeply rooted in militant Islam, and that's why this regime will always be an enemy of America."



WASHINGTON WARNING — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addresses a joint session of the U.S. Congress on March 3 in Washington, D.C., warning that the radical Muslimocracy in Iran poses a grave threat to the world in its quest to produce nuclear weapons. (BP screen grab courtesy of C-Span)



CORINTH, MS - WHEELER GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH

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Speakers



Schedule

WEDNESDAY - MARCH - 18TH 2015

6:30 pm Collingsworth Family Full Concert

THURSDAY - MARCH - 19TH 2015

10:00 am Bailey Smith, Kara Blackard

1:45 pm Gerald Harris, Steve Hale

6:30 pm Jr. Hill, David Jeremiah

FRIDAY - MARCH - 20TH 2015

10:00 am Mike Stone, Paul Blair

1:45 pm Josh Smith, Steve Smith, Bob Pittman

6:30 pm Paige Patterson, Colonel Oliver North

Music



Hotels

Hampton Inn - 662-286-5949 • Holiday Inn Express - 662-287-1407 • Quality Inn - 662-287-4421

March 18-20, 2015

Real Evangelism Bible Conf. set for March 18-20 in Corinth

CORINTH, Ms. (Special) - Wheeler Grove Church, Corinth, will host the 2015 Bailey Smith Real Evangelism Bible Conference March 18-20 at the church's facilities at 21 County Line Road 519.

Speakers include Bailey Smith, Kara Blackard, Gerald Harris, Steve Hale, Junior Hill, David

Jeremiah, Mike Stone, Paul Blair, Josh Smith, Steve Smith, Bob Pittman, Paige Patterson, and Oliver North. Worship and praise will be provided by the Collingsworth Family, Mike Speck Trio, Mae Beth, Eddie Middleton, and the Wheeler Grove Choir.

Meals will be provided at no

cost for lunch and supper on March 19 and March 20. "Everyone is invited," said Blackard, pastor of Wheeler Grove Church. For more information, contact the church at (662) 287-2864. E-mail: office@wheलगrovebaptist.com. Web site (full schedule): wheलगrovebaptist.com.

GuideStone: IRS notice doesn't apply to entity's participants

DALLAS (Special) - An Internal Revenue Service (IRS) notice issued Feb. 18 should have no impact on GuideStone health plan participants, the Southern Baptist entity said March 2.

IRS Notice 2015-17 relates to certain employers maintaining employer payment plans (EPPs) that reimburse for individual health care coverage. GuideStone's health plans, including the Personal Plans, are considered group coverage for purposes of federal law.

The IRS notice clarified guidance on the one-employee health plan exception from the market reform provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), commonly known as Obamacare, as well as reimbursement arrangements for Medicare and TRICARE.

The Notice also provides relief for small employers that had maintained premium reimbursement arrangements in 2014 and during the first half of 2015. Prior to the notice and its provision of this transition relief, some organizations could have been subject to penalties



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up to \$36,500 per year, per participant, per PPACA violation.

Organizations that offer GuideStone's health plans, regardless of how the policies are paid, were never at risk of these penalties.

"GuideStone health plan participants, and the organizations that employ them, can continue to pay for coverage as they have in the past and meet the guidelines under current law," said Harold R. Loftin Jr., GuideStone general counsel.

"For churches and ministries that use other providers, it's important for them to review the IRS notice, as well as work with their legal and accounting advisors to ensure they are compliant by the end of the grace period on June 30, 2015."

GuideStone has made available resources on its website to help churches and ministries understand the PPACA and its requirements. More information can be found at GuideStone.org/healthreform.

Staff Changes



CONCORD CHURCH, SMITH ASSOCIATION, has called Will McNeese as pastor. A New Hebron native, McNeese comes with his wife Katie and two-year-old son Nate.

MS POSITIONS

BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH, SCOTT COUNTY IS SEEKING A FULL TIME PASTOR. Send resumes to: Branch Baptist Church, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, 1484 Midway Road, Morton, MS 39117. Contact: 601-854-6791 or email: mhcoward@att.net

UNION BAPTIST CHURCH, MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI, IS CURRENTLY SEEKING A PART-TIME ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT PERSON (CHURCH SECRETARY). If interested, please send resume to Union Baptist Church, 159 Highway 514, Meridian, Mississippi.

BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH, A SMALL COUNTRY CHURCH BETWEEN DREW AND RULEVILLE, MISS. IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR THE POSITION OF BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR. If 1 April 2015. Please send resumes to P.O. Box 249, Drew, Miss. 38737.

TOPEKA BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTER OF YOUTH. Send resumes to: 807 China Grove Road, Jayess, MS 39641 or brodale54@bellsouth.net.

LAKE HARBOR BAPTIST CHURCH IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR A PIANO PLAYER AND A MUSIC DIRECTOR. Please send resumes to: Lake Harbor Baptist Church %Personnel Committee P. O. Box 339, Sandhill, Ms 39161 or email resumes to sust.moore@gmail.com

BUCATUNNA BAPTIST CHURCH IN CLARKE COUNTY IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR EITHER BI-VOCATIONAL OR FULL-TIME PASTOR. Please send resumes to: 10806 CR514, Meridian, MS 39301

STRONG RIVER BAPTIST CHURCH IN PINOLA, MS IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR THE POSITION OF BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR. Please send resumes to: Gene Farmer at 209 Katie Bush Rd Pinola, MS 39149

AUBURN BAPTIST CHURCH IN TUPELO MS IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR THE POSITION OF CHILDREN'S MINISTER. Please email resumes to jhenry@aurnbaptistchurch.org or mail to Auburn Baptist Church, 1135 Road 931, Tupelo, Ms 38804

CLASSIFIEDS

CHURCH BUSES FOR SALE - 1995 Ford Diesel, appraised at \$8,000; 1999 International Diesel, appraised at \$12,000. Both in working order. Price negotiable. Brandon area. Call 601-829-1004 M-F.

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HAFYP RZYP XJK HN RZYP NJUN; IJL

RPHY NJU ZN PF RPJW YPF IHYPFL

EPHNYFUFYP UJY?

PFDLFRN YRFAQF: NFQFU

Clue: I = F

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: 2 Peter 1:2

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted. Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, buildings, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

"Right now I think we'll move forward with greater courage... leaning more towards faith and a lot less towards fear."

Greg Dorsey

International Mission Board (IMB) strategy leader

ATTACKS

cont. from p. 1

during the attacks, "addressing their fear with faith and moving forward. "It became an opportunity for [IMB personnel] to reflect on their fear in comparison with their faith and how they were going to respond. Right now I think we'll move forward with greater courage... leaning more towards faith and a lot less towards fear."

Foshee said he hopes the persecution in Niger will increase awareness among Christians in the U.S. of what life is like in West Africa, "where the Christian population is less than a one-tenth of a percent of the total population, and how much Christ needs to be made known in a place like this."

Dorsey said the attacks in Niger should also serve as a reminder of churches all around the world facing persecution. "Pray for the people in those churches, that they would remain firm in their faith," he said.

■ Pray for missionaries and national believers who live in parts of the world where Christians are persecuted.

■ Pray that Christians in America will find ways to reach out to persecuted churches around the world.

■ Pray that believers will be bold in their witness, and gracious, loving, and forgiving toward those who persecute them.

■ Pray that believers will know how to share their faith in love, and that they will demonstrate the hope and confidence they have in Christ.

MARRIAGE

cont. from p. 1

to win marriage nationwide."

Same sex marriage is now legal in 37 states, nearly tripling the 13 states where it was legal just 18 months ago. It also is legal in the District of Columbia. At present, it is not legal in Mississippi but a decision on the state's appeal of a lower federal court ruling in favor of same sex marriage to the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans is expected any day.

In January, the U.S. Supreme Court granted review of a November decision by the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals involving challenges to laws in the states of Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee. A three-judge panel of the Sixth Circuit, which is based in Cincinnati, was the first federal appeals court to rule states could limit marriage to the

union of a man and a woman.

Four other appeals courts had previously invalidated state laws that prohibited same sex marriage.

In the cases the justices will consider from the Sixth Circuit, the voters of Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee all approved constitutional amendments between 2004 and 2006 that limited marriage to a man and a woman.

The Supreme Court has consolidated the four cases and limited consideration to two questions:

■ Does the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution require a state "to license a marriage between two people of the same sex?"

■ Does the 14th Amendment require a state "to recognize a marriage between two people of the same sex when their marriage was lawfully licensed and performed out-of-state?"

FESTIVAL

cont. from p. 1

Sweet Foam; and The Art of Talking to Yourself - Ventriloquism.

Hall said the annual festival will be on hiatus in 2016 as the event's planning committee develops a new and improved program. "There will be an expanded emphasis on missions and worship in the new format, and new ideas on how to present performing arts ministries."

"In addition, there are new technologies being introduced almost daily in our society and we want to explore ways to effectively incorporate them into the CPAF mission."

The next Mississippi Baptist Christian Performing Arts Festival will be held Feb. 24-25, 2017, at Brandon Church, Brandon.

For more information, contact Hall at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3286 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 286. E-mail: khall@mbcb.org. Web site: mbcb.org.

MOAK

cont. from p. 2

What then, of marriage? Is it worth saving and preserving? Yes! God knows how to build a civilization, and He gave us this incredible institution from the foundation of the world. His model is perfect. It's we who fail, not marriage itself and certainly not God.

Make no mistake. Marriage is hard. It takes a lot of work, patience, a sense of humor, willingness to forgive, tons of love, and constant prayer. Many couples, including my own parents who will soon celebrate 60 years together, have demonstrated that a God-honoring marriage can make powerful waves of influence that will resonate in lives through the generations.

It's a fact, regardless of how the world may chafe at the idea. A man and a woman — committed first to God, then to each other, and jointly committed to honoring Him — represent God's perfect plan for building a civilization.

If this generation fails to protect, honor, and strengthen marriage, our descendants will suffer the consequences.

Moak, a deacon at Broadmoor Church, Madison, is a freelance writer who lives in Madison with wife Lori and sons Daniel and Caleb. He may be contacted at bill.moak@yahoo.com.

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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

DECEMBER 16-31, 2014

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Jack & Carol Simmons
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Jesse Singleton
Mrs. Sandra Singleton
Carl & Sharon Smith
Mr. Paul D. Hastings
Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Stewart & Family
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Mr. & Mrs. Ron A. Yarbrough
Ms. Phyllis A. Yarbrough

DECEMBER 16-31, 2014

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Mr. & Mrs. Curtis A. Buchanan
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Mr. & Mrs. Glynn Jones
Rebecca Sharp Jackson
Mr. & Mrs. Rodis L. Wheeler
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Mr. & Mrs. Glynn Jones
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Guy & Barbara Branscome
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Clay Lewis
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Robert L. Loper
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Mike Love
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FBC Hazlehurst
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George & Pat Oakman
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Mrs. Cathy Tubbs Overstreet
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S. E. Pace
Mr. & Mrs. Robert L. Fortenberry
Mr. & Mrs. E. M. Parsons
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Mike Parsons
Mr. & Mrs. E. C. Parsons
Darlene Bates Paxton
Mrs. Gail Garner
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Mr. & Mrs. Daniel A. Smith
Mr. Merideth Pierce
Mr. & Mrs. Billy Mangold
Sherri Pierce
Midway BC
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Mr. & Mrs. Harold Lowery
Jason Powell
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Preston Brooks
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Bryan & Nettie Smith
Miss Sarah Marie Smith
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Charles Smith
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Sisco
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Mrs. Mary Smith
Dr. Rebecca Sue Wilkie
Graham Brooke Snider
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Mr. & Mrs. Lester Haddox
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Dixie Woods
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Mrs. Margret Keeton
Randy & Stephanie Johnson
Shirley McCraw
Bethany BC
Matt McNeil
Suzanne Sumrall
Alex Sumrall Massingill
Bradley & Brody Measells
Bobbie & Mark Measells
Harold L. Newcomb
Dr. Lisa S. Newcomb
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JANUARY 2015

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Mr. & Mrs. Larry Onkes
Mrs. Helen Tucker Farris Allen
Mr. & Mrs. Jim Alford
Shaeffer's Chapel UMC
Mr. & Mrs. Edward (Ted) P. Connell, Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. Tommy Lindsey
Mrs. Germaine Arnold
Ms. Betty C. Killebrew
Ms. Kathleen Shackelford
Ms. Riley C. Cole
Ms. Yvonne Havard
Ms. Susan Harris

Our Great Salvation • Zephaniah 3:8-17

Several years ago, there was a country and western show called "Hee-Haw". It was sometimes serious, sometimes comical, but usually with a message for the heart. Often there would be a song by two of the cast that would relate a story of hope turned to despair.

"Gloom, despair, and agony on me. Deep dark depression and excessive misery. If it weren't for bad luck, I'd have no luck at all...Gloom, despair and agony on me!"

Certainly the people of Israel under the prophet Zephaniah may have felt the same way. He was preaching judgment and destruction to purify the people under the hand of God. That was not the hope and comfort they were looking for. But Zephaniah would bring his writing to a conclusion with a ray of hope for those who call out in faith.

Walk in Faith (Zephaniah 3:8)

"Therefore wait for the Lord...My determination is to gather the nations" (Zephaniah 3:8 NKJV)

Zephaniah told the people one day God would rise up and punish His enemies, but they had to wait. But waiting can indeed be taxing on our faith. They needed to heed Isaiah's word in Is. 40:31 "But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up on wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they

shall walk and not faint." (NKJV)

Great movements of God have always been preceded by times of prayerful waiting, walking in faith, believing God to do what He says He will do. We must remember the words of Paul to the church at Thessalonica in 2 Thessalonians 5:24 "He who calls you is faithful also to do it." (NKJV)

Our problem is patience. God's call to us is perseverance.

Call on God (Zephaniah 3:9-13)

For then I will restore to the people a pure language, that they may call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him in

one accord" (Zephaniah 3:9 NKJV)

Zephaniah told the people that God would prepare them for the coming judgment by raising up a people who would call on the name of the Lord. They would have a single minded purpose to come before the Lord in repentance. Once they had repented, they would have a mind and heart who

walk in righteousness. "I will leave in your midst a meek and humble people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." (Zephaniah 3:12 NKJV)

Romans 10:13 "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (NKJV)

Jeremiah 29:13 "You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your hearts" (NKJV)

It is not the proud and arrogant who find forgiveness and cleansing with God. It is only those who humble them-

selves, repent of their sins and fall on the grace of Jesus Christ alone that find redemption and hope.

Explore the Bible

with Kiely D. Young



Celebrate Salvation (Zephaniah 3:14-17)

"Sing, O daughter of Zion! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away your judgments. He has cast out your enemy." (Zephaniah 3:14-15 NKJV)

The hymn writer penned it well, "O happy day when Jesus washed my sins away"

Zephaniah told the Israelites there was hope. He told them not to fear. "The Lord God is in your midst, the Mighty One to save. He will rejoice over you with gladness." (Zephaniah 3:17 NKJV)

The Israelites had faced the continuous oppression of their enemies. They knew despair and hopelessness. But Zephaniah reminded them that God is strong enough to overcome all enemies and loving enough to forgive all who come to Him in faith.

The message of faith has not changed and the need for salvation has not decreased. We have an ever present enemy who will stop at nothing to defeat God's people. We must realize there is only ONE WAY to overcome the enemy, faith in Jesus Christ alone. Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (NKJV)

We teach our children the simple ABC's

Admit to God you are a sinner
Believe that Jesus alone can save
Confess Jesus to be your Savior.
There alone is the hope for any people, anywhere, anytime.

Young is retired Sunday School Director, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, and a member of Ridgcrest Church, Madison.

Power Like No Other • Mark 4:35-41

Jesus is like no other. He was prophesied in advance like no other and born miraculously like no other. Through this passage of scripture, we will see that He displayed power like no other.

We turn to the gospel according to Mark for our study of the unique life of Jesus. The author of the second gospel account is John Mark. The Apostle Peter called him "son" in chapter five of first Peter. There are indications that John Mark was mentored by Peter in his writing of the gospel of Mark. In Acts 15, the Apostle Paul deemed Mark to be a "deserter" when he walked away from his job as partner with Paul and Barnabas during their first missionary journey. In later writings to Philemon, to the Colossians and to Timothy, Paul would welcome Mark back into the fold. In Colossians 4:10, Paul writes that Mark was the cousin of Barnabas. I am always blessed by the fact that he had direct contact with Peter and Paul. If he was the "young man" described as being in the Garden of Gethsemane in Mark 14:51 (as some have supposed), then he also spent time with Jesus. Wow.

"Immediately" is a key word in Mark's gospel, indicating a deep sense of ministry urgency throughout these sixteen chapters. In chapter four, Je-

sus is with the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee. The ever faithful following crowd has gathered around Jesus as He teaches from a boat at the water's edge. His "floating pulpit" has been securely docked in the shallows most of the afternoon. He is passionately fishing for the hearts of the seashore listeners. In the evening, Jesus invited the disciples to join him in a boat ride to the other side of the lake. They thought their "Jesus lesson" for the day was completed. They were about to get some on-the-job training they would never forget.

Mark tells us that they took Jesus "just as He was." I believe that means He was exhausted from a long day of teaching and being with people. Verse 38 confirms that Jesus headed for the stern (rear) section of the boat. He lay down on a pillow and went to sleep. Jesus took a "Jonah" nap. However, unlike Jonah, Jesus was not running away from His job assignment. He

was resting so He could run with new strength toward His work. Jesus made it plain all along his ministry journey that He needed time alone to rest, renew, reload and rebound after reconnecting in prayer and time spent with His Father. His life habits are patterns for our lessons in followership.

Mark pens: "...and there arose a fierce gale of wind." A word study shows

us that this description indicates that suddenly, without warning, there was a storm. This was a large, loud storm with

wind coming from all directions. Wind and waves were joining hands: lapping, reaching, creeping into the boat. This was a frightening event for everyone on board except The Sleeper.

The very nervous passengers made a decision to wake Jesus and to chastise Him for being obviously unconcerned about their perilous situation. He roused from sleep. He regarded the situation. He rebuked the wind and

spoke these words over the waters: "Hush! Be Still!" If Jesus had lived in the south with me, He might have said it this way: "Hey windy, put a lid on it!"

His powerful words brought the storm to an immediate, complete end. The waters which had danced dangerously at the bidding of the wind became perfectly calm. With a word from Jesus, their boat slid out of a boiling, rolling cauldron of waves onto a completely smooth, glassy surface of quiet water. They could see the perfect reflection of the night sky above that lake and possibly even their own dumfounded faces as they peered over the side of the boat in total disbelief.

Making it to the other side was never in doubt in the mind of Jesus. With full awareness of the coming storm, He slept. His lesson for the disciples tested their faith, identified their fears and solidified His God-given power over creation. The One Who breathed life into Adam and empowered the Dry Valley Bones in Ezekiel and filled the Prayers in the Upper Room on Pentecost grabbed the wind and silenced it. Their Teacher was The Wind Maker. Jesus. Power like no other.

Brown is staff evangelist, First Church, Richland.

Bible Studies for Life

with Becky Brown



Revivals & Homecomings

► Rocky Mount Church, Calhoun County: Revival, Mar. 15 - 18; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.;

Randy Rinehart, speaker; Susie Haggard, music; Larry W. Haggard, pastor.

► Fair River Church, Brookhaven: Revival, Mar. 15

- 18; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 6:30 p.m.; Jody Johnson, speaker; Flight 8:36 (Eric Campbell & Paul Blake), music; Jay Anderson, pastor.

► Corinth Church, Heidelberg: Revival, Mar. 15 - 18; Sun., 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Dale Adams, speaker; Lee Robinson, music.